

Baldrige Award Process Improvement Panel

In January 2007, a panel was convened to recommend potential improvements to the Baldrige Award process. The panel's discussions and recommendations addressed three areas:

1. Process improvements to improve feedback provided to applicants;
2. Changes to the current conflict of interest policy, specifically pertaining to applications from the organizations of Foundation Directors and donors; and
3. Equity and fairness in the evaluation of applications across different organizations and over time for repeat applicants.

The panel was led by the Chair of the Board of Overseers and President of the College of Charleston, George Benson. Panel members included: Archie Carroll, an ethicist from the University of Georgia; Amy Friedman, a current senior Examiner and a Physician and Associate Professor of Surgery at the Yale University School of Medicine; Dean Hubbard, an acknowledged multiyear applicant and President of Northwest Missouri State University; Ed Scott, an Award recipient and Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Caterpillar Financial Services Corporation; and Vicki Spagnol, a former Judge and President of Management Insights. The panel conducted its work via three conference calls: one to scope the charge and discuss desired background information; one to ask questions based on the documentation requested/supplied and to discuss preliminary recommendations; and one to make final recommendations.

At their June 2007 meeting, the Overseers made a modification to the third recommendation regarding equity and fairness in the evaluation of applications across different organizations and over time for repeat applicants. The final recommendations are as follows:

Regarding process improvements to improve feedback provided to applicants:

- Define roles for Team Leader and Back-up Team Leader at Consensus and Site Visit Reviews more clearly. The Back-up Team Leader's responsibilities might include drafting the scorebook's key themes.
- Staff all Site Visit teams with at least seven members, thereby ensuring that the Team Leader is able to play an integrating role for the team. He/she will participate in evaluating Category 1, but should not be the sole lead for any Category.
- Give the Team Leaders and Back-up Team Leaders an additional two days after site visit to review their reports before submitting them to ASQ for distribution to the Judges. This would allow the Team Leader and Back-up Team Leader to edit the team's work; it is not intended to provide opportunities for changing the team's conclusions.

Regarding Conflicts of Interest:

- Codify the Foundation–Baldrige Program relationship so that it can be more easily communicated. A Code of Conduct should be created by the Baldrige Foundation and signed by the Foundation Officers and Directors.
- During Foundation meetings, when the Directors are discussing solicitations for fundraising, the Baldrige Program Director should be recused.
- During the final Judges’ meetings, when the Judges are discussing any applicant that has an employee who is a Foundation Officer or member of the Foundation Board of Directors, the Baldrige Program Director should be recused.
- During the final Judges’ meetings, if there is discussion of an applicant that is a recent donor to the Foundation, the Baldrige Program Director should be recused. (Recent is defined as going back 3 years, beginning with the current year.)
- Remove the Foundation list of Trustees, Officers, etc., from the BNQP Web site.
- Place a governance tab on the BNQP Web site, with the following information:
 - A written statement that describes the relationship between the Overseers and the Panel of Judges.
 - A written statement that contains the conflict of interest rules for the Foundation and for the Panel of Judges. State why the Overseers do not have conflicts of interest.
 - The conflict of interest processes for Examiners and Judges.
- Clarify the relationships in the current BNQP organizational chart to show a direct link between the Baldrige Program and the Overseers.
- Collect and track data that Examiners or applicants report to the Baldrige Program concerning the number and types of Examiner conflicts of interest that require a reassignment.

Regarding equity and fairness in the evaluation of applications across different organizations and over time for repeat applicants:

- The Highest Ranking Official (HRO) in an organization that is a repeat applicant may include strengths and OFIs from previous Baldrige application reports in his/her opening remarks to the site visit team. Additionally, the HRO may describe the organization’s actions that addressed the comments from the previous evaluation.

- In their leadership meeting as well as throughout the site visit, the Team Leader and NIST monitor should encourage the HRO to share concerns with regard to specific events in the current or prior site visits.
- The applicant may make a prior report available to the site visit team, and the team may read it. However, the report must be offered by the applicant; the team may not request it.